



PRESS RELEASE
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**FORMER CITY OFFICIALS AND OTHERS INDICTED FOR CRIMES
RELATED TO DEALINGS WITH UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Tampa, Florida - United States Attorney Paul I. Perez, Carl Whitehead, Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the Tampa Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Lance Newman, Director, Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), and Sheri Campbell, Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) of Housing and Urban Development - Office of Inspector General (HUD-OIG), today announced the unsealing of a sixty-count indictment charging five individuals with public corruption-related offenses and federal violations arising from alleged corruption in the administration and disbursement of grants from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD is the Federal agency responsible for national policy and programs that address America's housing needs, that improve and develop the Nation's communities, and enforce fair housing laws.

The indictment charges STEVEN ALLEN LaBRAKE, age 52, PAULETTE LYNNE McCARTER, age 33, DEAN R. RYAN, age 65, CHESTER MAURICE LUNEY, age 59, and

LORI A. ROBERTS, age 40, with conspiracy to defraud and commit offenses against the United States and wire fraud. The maximum penalty for the conspiracy charge is five years' imprisonment and the maximum penalty for the wire fraud charge is twenty years' imprisonment.

In addition, RYAN and LUNEY are charged with bribing a public official. LaBRAKE and McCARTER are charged with receiving bribes as public officials. The maximum penalty for each bribery-related count is fifteen years' imprisonment. Additional charges against RYAN and LUNEY include giving a gratuity to a public official, and additional charges against LaBRAKE and McCARTER include receiving gratuities and theft or bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds. LUNEY is also charged with one count of theft or bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds and one count of stealing public money. The maximum penalty for each gratuity-related count is two years' imprisonment, the maximum penalty for each count of theft or bribery concerning programs receiving federal funds is ten years' imprisonment and the maximum penalty for stealing public money is ten years' imprisonment.

The indictment alleges that LaBRAKE, as the Director of the City of Tampa Business and Community Development Services, and McCARTER, as the Senior Redevelopment Counselor for the City of Tampa Community Redevelopment Agency, received bribes and gratuities from RYAN, a State of Florida licensed General Contractor, and LUNEY, the Chief Executive Officer of the "THAP Group," in relation to HUD grants. ROBERTS was a loan officer at the University of South Florida Federal Credit Union, responsible for the administration of loan applications and the control of loan disbursements, and is alleged to have been part of the conspiracy with the other defendants to defraud HUD.

Mr. Perez stated, "Federal grants are critical to our community's need for affordable housing for lower and moderate income families. We will not tolerate public officials lining their pockets with taxpayers' money intended to aid citizens of our community. This office will vigorously investigate and prosecute public servants who steal money and accept bribes at the expense of honest, law abiding citizens."

FBI SAC Whitehead stated that, "Investigation of Public Corruption has, and will remain, one of the FBI's top priorities. Whenever a public official engages in a corruption scheme that involves the abuse of the public official's trust, those actions undermine the integrity of government operations. The FBI will continue to thoroughly investigate all allegations of public corruption." Whitehead praised the efforts of FDLE and HUD-OIG through this long term joint investigation.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Inspector General, and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. This case will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.